

VZCZCXRO7562  
PP RUEHAST RUEHFL RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHC #5110 0450059  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P R 140056Z FEB 08  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 7893  
INFO ORG FOR SECURITY CO OP IN EUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS STATE 015110

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [UNMIK](#) [KV](#) [YI](#)  
SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: CONTINGENCY GUIDANCE ON  
KOSOVO

1. Should Serbia raise Kosovo at the February 14 Permanent Council meeting in Vienna, Post is authorized to present the following contingency statement in response.

Begin text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States along with our European partners have been actively engaged in promoting stability in the Balkan region for over 15 years. The region is key to European security.

The United States has made its position on this issue clear: We need to resolve the last major issue resulting from the breakup of Yugoslavia ) Kosovo,s status ) if we want to ensure long-term stability in the region and accelerate the region,s integration into the Euro-Atlantic family.

Belgrade and Pristina have negotiated Kosovo,s status for over two years. The Un Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari led negotiations for 15 months and the EU-Russia-Troika for four months last fall. The negotiators left no stone unturned in attempted to find a mutually agreed upon solution.

The UN Secretary General and the Contact Group both observed that the status quo in Kosovo is unsustainable. Without clarity Kosovo cannot access international financial lending or attract investors. The people of Kosovo cannot partake of the opportunities offered by participation in international forums and initiatives.

We and a number of European states have made clear that, absent an agreement between the parties, the Ahtisaari Plan is the best way forward. We believe, as do many others in this room, that prompt implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, including its recommendation of supervised independence for Kosovo and critical measures to protect Kosovo's minorities, will promote regional stability and enable both Serbia and Kosovo to move forward on the Euro-Atlantic path.

Kosovo,s authorities have made considerable progress on the implementation of UN-endorsed standards, especially those that pertain to minority rights. They carried out a fair and free election and formed a government that includes all of Kosovo,s communities. They have also behaved responsibly in negotiations on Kosovo,s status and demonstrated patience in response to the international community,s inability to resolve the status issue. Maintaining the status quo would have damaging consequences for the political, social and economic development of Kosovo, Serbia and the region.

It is regrettable that some have said that Kosovo's independence would be a violation of the Helsinki Final Act, a basic principle of which is that all of its principles must be interpreted taking into account the others, including, for example, principles related to the respect for human rights, self-determination, and the indivisibility of security in Europe.

Kosovo must be viewed with the context of the break-up of Yugoslavia. It cannot be divorced from the history of ethnic cleansing and massive human rights violations that led to international intervention. UN Security Council decision 1244 placed Kosovo under international administration and effectively put an end to Belgrade's authority -- a situation unlike anywhere else in the OSCE region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

End Text.

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